

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 remain pending, and claims 3-5 are canceled. Claim 1 is currently amended for clarification. No claims are added.

In accordance with the requirement described on page 3 of the Office Action, applicants confirm their November 30, 2005 telephone election of claims 1 and 2 for further prosecution.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Ohtake et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,954,304, in view of Watanabe et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,673,541. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for multiple reasons.

First, the method of claim 1 includes the step of:

... feeding a release film deformed in advance to correspond to the curvature of the molded member.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1, so it also describes this subject matter.

The rejection relies on the Ohtake et al. disclosure in column 9, line 50, to anticipate “feeding a release film.” (The cited line of text includes the word “release film.”) However, the Office Action does not cite a statement or even a suggestion in Ohtake et al. that the release film is deformed to correspond to the curvature of a mold member as claimed. For at least this reason, the rejection is unjustified.

Applicants acknowledge the citation in the Office Action (see page 4, top) of column 14, line 21. Apparently, the intended reference was to the following sentence from lines 19-21:

The prepreg was tack-free and soft sufficient for taking off in roll form, proving excellent in workability on handling.

The Office Action elaborates that a statement that a prepreg has a “roll form” means that the prepreg has a curvature. The Office Action also elaborates that the phrase “workability on handling” means that the prepreg can be manipulated into any shape.

However, (1) the quoted claim step specifies that a “release film,” not a “prepreg,” has a curvature, *and* (2) the quoted claim step also specifies that the release film is deformed to correspond to the curvature of a “molded member,” which the preamble of the claim indicates is a “fiber reinforced plastic member.” A statement that an item, whether a release film or a prepreg, is excellent in workability on handling is not a teaching that the item is deformed to correspond to the curvature of a fiber reinforced plastic member as recited in the claim.

For at least these reasons, the rejection is unjustified and should be withdrawn.

Additionally, the claimed method includes the step of:

... laminating and deforming the prepreg into a predetermined shape ...

According to the Office Action, Ohtake et al. teaches this step in column 11, line 63.

However, the text of column 11, line 63, is a discussion of the Ohtake et al. Comparative Example 3, whereas the text of column 14, line 21, cited above as anticipating a fiber reinforced plastic member with a curvature, is text from the discussion of the Ohtake et al. Example 5. The Office Action provides no explanation of why excerpts describing the different examples should be interpreted as disclosing the same method. Instead, apparently various statements describing different methods are cited as corresponding to individual claim steps only without regard for whether the cited disclosures describe different steps *of the same method*.

Thus, the rejection is unjustified for an additional reason.

Further, claim 1 specifies that a hot-pressing step is performed:

... while pullers disposed before and after the hot-pressing step for gripping the prepreg laminated body and introducing the same into the hot press ~~[[is]]~~ are used to prevent tension from being placed on the fiber in the prepreg laminated body.

(As noted above, claim 1 is amended for clarification.) The rejection relies on Watanabe et al. to suggest modifying a hot-pressing step of Ohtake et al. to use pullers as described in the claim.

The Office Action indicates that such a modification would “suppress the uneven distribution and disturbance in the orientation of the fiber material.” (Page 5, top.)

However, the Office Action does not explain how it was supposedly known that Ohtake et al. method produced fiber material with uneven distribution and disturbance in orientation. Because there can be no motivation to solve a problem that was not known to exist, the comment cited in the previous paragraph is insufficient to serve as motivation for the modification.

To support the rejection, the Office Action cites column 5, line 3, of Watanabe et al., which is part of a discussion of winding a prepreg in tape form on and around a mandrel in synchronism with the mandrel. Applicants note that Fig. 1 shows carbon fiber prepreg tape 11 from bobbins 13 delivered by rotating bobbins 13 around mandrel 8 while applying tension. The rotational speed of the tape is made synchronous with the moving speed of two grasping mechanisms 17A and 17B. (Column 6, lines 54-62.)

That is, Watanabe et al. discloses synchronizing the *rotational* speed a prepreg tape around a mandrel with the *linear* speed of the mandrel. This is not a disclosure of putting pullers on the mandrel before and after bobbins 13. Also, Fig. 1 shows that the pullers (grasping mechanisms 17A and 17B) are *not* disposed before bobbins 13.

Applicants therefore respectfully disagree that the cited Watanabe et al. disclosure would have motivated someone to modify a hot-pressing step of Ohtake et al. to use pullers disposed *before and after* the region where the hot-pressing occurs. Accordingly, the rejection is unjustified for an additional reason.

In view of the present discussion, applicants solicit the withdrawal of the obviousness rejection of claims 1 and 2.


In a separate matter applicants note that the Office Action does not indicate review of the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed December 21, 2004. Applicants request that the next communication from the PTO provide such indication of review.

In view of the remarks above, applicants now submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowability is hereby requested. If for any reason it is believed that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is welcome to contact applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to discuss resolution of the remaining issues.

If this paper is not timely filed, applicants petition for an extension of time. The fee for the extension, and any other fees that may be due, may be debited from Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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